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SERVICE DATE - MARCH 21, 2002

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FR-4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 392X)]

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company—Abandonment
Exemption—in Flathead County, MT

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon a 3.60-mile line of railroad between milepost 1227.58 and milepost 1231.18, in Kalispell, Flathead County, MT. (line). The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 59901.

BNSF has certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic to be rerouted; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government agency acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on April 20, 2002,¹ unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,² formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),³ and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by April 1, 2002. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by April 10, 2002, with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001.

¹ While BNSF initially indicated a proposed consummation date of April 19, 2002, consummation may not take place prior to April 20, 2002 (50 days after the March 1, 2002 filing date of the verified notice). BNSF's representative has subsequently confirmed that consummation cannot occur before April 20, 2002.

² The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

³ Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1,000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25). This fee is scheduled to increase to \$1,100, effective April 8, 2002.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to BNSF's representative: Michael Smith, Esq., Freeborn & Peters, 311 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 3000, Chicago, IL 60606-6677. If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

BNSF has filed a separate environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by March 26, 2002. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423-0001) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565-1552. Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), BNSF shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by BNSF's filing of a notice of consummation by March 21, 2002, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

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Board decisions and notices are available on our website at www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: March 12, 2002.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary